

Coaching Framework Helps Maine Classrooms Sustain and Build Upon RREV Innovations

Launching new, pioneering programs to improve student outcomes requires consistent support to help maximize impact. The Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) and the Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) wanted to provide evidence-based strategies to support pilot programs launched under the state's [Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures \(RREV\)](#) grant program, which provides funding to innovative projects that help address inequalities in the state.

Effective coaches can help teams think more creatively, identify and overcome barriers, and collaborate with partners, all of which are critical when conceptualizing, planning, and implementing innovative solutions for systemic education challenges. Maine DOE staff recognized the importance of embedding coaches for district innovation teams and included them as a critical component of the RREV application.

At the same time, Maine DOE staff wanted to ensure that coaches were following evidence-based practices and getting the support they needed to be effective guides and mentors. With that goal in mind, Maine DOE worked with R1CC to develop a coaching framework to guide coaches in their work with RREV project teams.

"Prior to the coaching framework, our coaching practice was more cheerleader than strategic coach," said Elaine Bartley, RREV project director. "While support and encouragement are wonderful, purposeful and specific suggestions from a coach were much more meaningful and appreciated. But we were unsure how to offer the best support and technical assistance to our awardees as they worked to implement their pilot ideas."

While Maine DOE worked on developing a solution, R1CC served as a thought partner, identified evidence-based strategies, and collected feedback from coaches and project teams. It ultimately helped Maine DOE build a framework that would not only support the work of RREV coaches but could also be used to improve the effectiveness of coaching in various programs across Maine DOE. For example, Maine DOE's School Leadership Coaching program is collaborating with the RREV team to review the coaching framework and explore how to integrate the content and lessons learned into their program.

About RREV

RREV began as a program to provide financial support and autonomy to school districts that wanted to create innovative programs in response to the educational disruptions caused by COVID-19.

It continued beyond the pandemic to address systemic inequalities throughout the education system in Maine. The grant provides resources to support professional development, coursework, and coaching on effective design processes. R1CC has been a partner with Maine DOE on RREV since the beginning of the project.

Learn more about how R1CC has supported RREV:

- [Sparkling Innovation in Maine's Classrooms](#)
- [Year 2 Project Summary](#)
- [Year 3 Project Summary](#)
- [Year 4 Project Summary](#)

Beyond RREV

Bartley said that the coaching framework has been so successful and received such positive feedback that Maine DOE is sharing it with other projects throughout the state. She said the idea came from the educators she worked with in the field.

“The really cool part is that while the RREV funding is ending, our awardees have been expressing true appreciation that our coaching and work with them doesn’t have to end,” she said. “They have truly seemed to appreciate the critical friend component our coaching framework has offered them.”

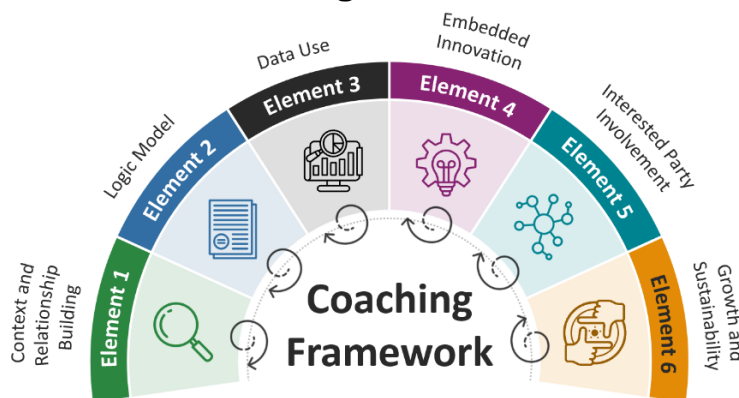
One of the reasons the framework will live on after RREV ends is because the team recognized the value of coaching in many different areas. [Research has shown](#) that coaches can help teams increase their impact on student outcomes. [Some of the benefits of coaching](#) in the classroom include increased productivity and motivation, more effective problem-solving using creative solutions, and improved instructional practice.

The evidence-based strategies and practices used by RREV coaches to achieve these benefits can easily translate to any type of coaching program, whether the coach is supporting individual teachers, teams, or projects. The coaching framework can also be used by education leaders, schools, and school districts anywhere, not just those in Maine or Region 1.

The Coaching Framework

The coaching framework (Exhibit 1) began as a seven-step process, which moved from contextual understanding and relationship building to facilitating conversations and planning for a sustainable program. This process helped coaches look at the programs they were supporting more holistically and provide more effective guidance.

Exhibit 1. The Coaching Framework



The coaching framework has six interconnected elements that coaches can use to guide conversations with their mentees. [View an accessible PDF of the coaching framework.](#)

“The coaching framework provided direction,” said Helene Adams, a RREV coach. “Without the framework it would be possible, and likely, that a coach may lean too much on their own strengths as they support schools. The framework can remind a coach of all the different aspects of innovation and supporting school change.”

She added that, if coaches did not step out of their comfort zones, the schools they were supporting might stumble on a challenge for which the coach was unprepared. For instance, a coach who focused too heavily on data collection might not provide enough support for project sustainability or engaging interested parties. This would result in a program with high-quality data but no understanding of how to share those data so that other schools could mirror their success.

Because of this added structure and support, the framework has helped to amplify the impact of the RREV grants by providing grantees with effective and efficient guidance throughout the life cycle of their projects.

Evolution and Adaptation

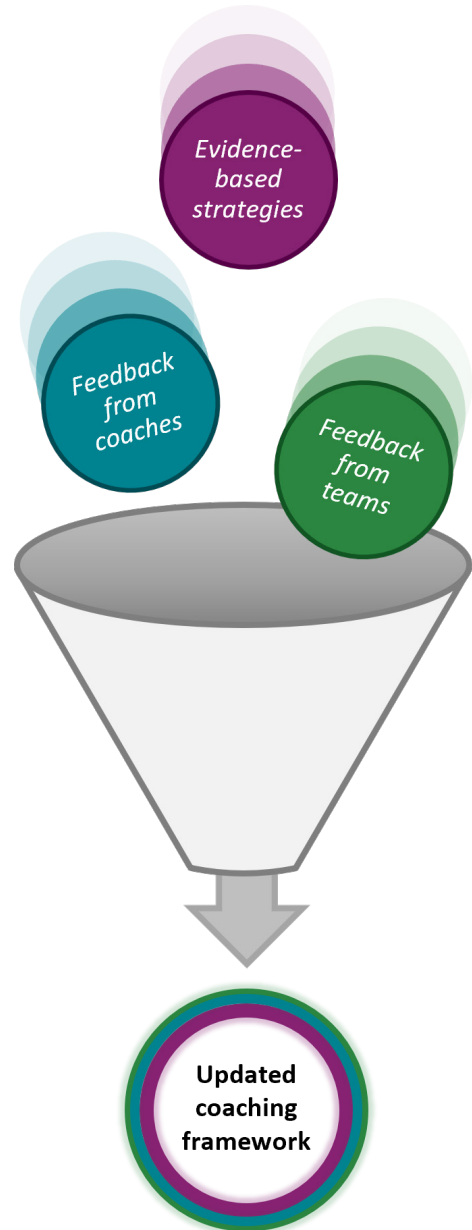
As the R1CC team worked with coaches and RREV leadership, the project team recognized the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation as the framework was implemented in the field. During implementation, the project team noticed that the steps tended to intersect and overlap and grantees did not always follow a linear path through the framework as initially suggested.

For instance, Adams said she did not move through the steps outlined in the framework. Instead, she used the framework to help her identify where the teams she was coaching needed help, and she would zero in on the corresponding “step” to help them find solutions.

“Having a framework in place gave me more confidence as a coach to introduce areas of focus, suggesting that we spend time looking at the logic model or discussing different ways to capture the successes and challenges of implementation,” she said. “I could look at the framework and ask myself, ‘What have we not really discussed together?’”

The R1CC team realized the process needed to reflect this weaving path, so the team re-imagined the model (Exhibit 2). Instead of a seven-step process with a set place to start and end, they visualized the framework as six circular elements that coaches can flexibly move between to meet the needs of their projects.

Exhibit 2. Framework Development



R1CC created a new version of the framework and continued to work with Maine DOE leadership, coaches in the field, and educators to edit and refine it into something that could be more broadly applied. The team's efforts throughout the project have been appreciated by more than just those involved in the grant.

Technical Assistance Approach

Working with educators and education leaders throughout the state, the R1CC team created the evidence-based coaching framework to help coaches understand the needs of the programs they were supporting, identify solutions to challenges, and promote growth and sustainability.

This initiative added to [R1CC's previous work supporting the RREV grant](#). Since the project began, R1CC developed training, resources, and tools for leadership and grantees. As the RREV program grew from nine innovation pilots into 41 funded projects statewide, R1CC adapted its approach while focusing on building the capacity of staff and coaches to support the implementation and sustainability of all projects.

R1CC has provided thought partnership, developed materials and resources, and supported organizational structures and functions. Maine DOE staff, RREV coaches, and RREV project teams have all provided positive feedback about R1CC's resources and support.

The team will build upon this success as R1CC continues its support in Year 5, including developing *Self-Assessment for Scaling Effective Innovations*, a tool to help district teams to collaboratively assess their progress while implementing innovative programs.